

VZCZCXRO4790
RR RUEHMA RUEHPA
DE RUEHOS #0461/01 3241416
ZNR UUUUU ZZH
R 191416Z NOV 08
FM AMCONSUL LAGOS
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC 0307
INFO RUEHZK/ECOWAS COLLECTIVE
RUEHUJA/AMEMBASSY ABUJA 9949
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC
RUCPDOG/DEPT OF COMMERCE WASHDC
RUEATRS/DEPT OF TREASURY WASHDC
RHEBAAA/DEPT OF ENERGY WASHDC
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHINGTON DC
RHEFDIA/DIA WASHINGTON DC
RUEWMFD/HQ USAFRICOM STUTTGART GE
RUFOADA/JAC MOLESWORTH RAF MOLESWORTH UK

UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 LAGOS 000461

SENSITIVE
SIPDIS

STATE FOR AF/W, DRL

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [ELAB](#) [PGOV](#) [SENV](#) [NI](#)

SUBJECT: NIGERIA: LAGOS LABOR UNIONS ACTIVE; POTENTIAL FOR
E-WASTE PROGRAM

REF: ABUJA 2143

11. (SBU) Summary: During an October 8-13 visit to Lagos by Tu Dang of the Office of International Labor Affairs and Corporate Social Responsibility, local labor union officials said that the use of casual labor in the oil industry is their top concern. Labor leaders are also worried about the safety of their union members working in the volatile Niger Delta region. They singled out Shell as a particularly difficult company to work with. Representatives from an environmental NGO said Nigeria has inadequate e-waste handling procedures and a tour of a local used electronics market reinforced that conclusion. U.S. assistance in developing an e-waste program or raising awareness of the issue would be welcomed by the local labor and environmental communities. End Summary.

12. (U) During meetings from October 8-13 with labor and trade unions in Lagos, union officials explained to Dang and Poloff that they are active in advocating for workers, rights and frequently engage government in workplace issues. Dang met Elijah Okougbo, General Secretary of the National Union of Petroleum and Natural Gas Workers (NUPENG), Lumumba Okugbawa, Deputy General Secretary of Petroleum and Natural Gas Senior Staff Association of Nigeria (PENGASSAN), Trade Union Congress (TUC), and the Maritime Worker,s Union.

13. (SBU) At NUPENG and PENGASSAN, the oil industry unions which are the most powerful labor organizations in Nigeria, both officials stated that their number one concern is the casualization of workers by international oil companies. Casualization entails hiring short-term contract employees and providing limited benefits, while using these temporary workers over the long-term to avoid hiring permanent employees. The lack of standardized conditions of service and contracts, particularly for long-term workers, has led both organizations to negotiate permanent conditions of service for both lower-level and management-level employees. Both claim to have been successful overall with Chevron and ExxonMobil, but state that Shell continues to be problematic in its hiring practices, leading to further tension with the company. They stated that Shell,s attitude toward local workers may be motivation behind attacks on Shell installations in the Delta. They also complained about expatriate oil workers taking jobs that should be filled by Nigerians.

14. (SBU) Both NUPENG and PENGASSAN are deeply concerned about

what one NUPENG official called the bastardization of human rights⁸ by militants who put workers and villagers in harm's way and the dangerous conditions of work in the oil region. The unions are pressing for safer working and traveling conditions, particularly in the waterways of the southern states. While the officials have engaged in industrial relations and conflict management training, both indicated a desire to obtain further training in trade union management and negotiation skills.

¶5. (U) Dan Uhumangho, of the Trade Union Congress (TUC), an umbrella organization for smaller trade unions, raised more general labor issues, including the casualization of labor, employers who discourage workers from unionizing, and the benefit of implementation of HIV/AIDS policies in all sectors of labor. TUC has worked on several USG sponsored projects with the Solidarity Center, and expressed a desire to obtain more training and participate in any related labor programs. The Maritime Worker's Union representative, Onikolease Irabor, expressed similar concerns about casualization of dockworkers, and problems relating to conditions of service due to recent concession and privatization of the port.

E-Waste Handling in Lagos is Inadequate

¶6. (U) Dang and Poloff met with Gbolahan Adedotun of The Center for Environment Education and Development, an environmental non-governmental organization, to discuss the issue of disposal of old computer and electronics parts, or e-waste. Adedotun indicated that e-waste in the Lagos area is not separated from other solid waste and poses dangers for

LAGOS 00000461 002 OF 002

workers employed in waste management, electronics factories, and local markets where used computer parts are traded. A visit by Poloff and Dang to Computer Village⁸, a large computer and electronics market in Lagos, confirmed that there are no formal procedures for disposing of unusable electronic equipment, which is generally collected from the streets in wheelbarrows and then taken to a large dumpsite, where all the waste is sorted through by persons scavenging for food or useable items.

¶7. (SBU) Comment: The trade unions in Lagos are clearly committed to improved working conditions and labor rights on issues of concern such as casualization of workers, HIV/AIDS, and safety and security. The more mature oil-related unions have developed effective models of operation and negotiation, while smaller unions still struggle with limited resources that hinder their level of influence. Although some contacts were aware of the e-waste issue, discussions showed that there is little understanding of its dangers, and there is a general misconception that only a small group of informal workers will be affected. Post believes an e-waste program would be beneficial to workers in the electronics and waste management sector, as well as diminish the impending environmental and health issues caused by e-waste. End Comment.

¶8. (U) This cable has been cleared by Embassy Abuja.
BLAIR